



**Te Kāwanatanga  
o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

# Summary of Engagement Refresh of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

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**June–July 2024**



# Background

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Early in 2024, the Minister for Child Poverty Reduction Hon Louise Upston directed that the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (the Strategy), published in 2019, should be refreshed to better reflect the current Government's policies, priorities and activities.

The Minister directed officials to engage with a targeted group of stakeholders and partners. During June-July 2024, engagement was undertaken via a series of focus groups, workshops and bespoke engagements in two key workstreams:

- a child and youth engagement workstream led by the Children and Young People's Commission | Mana Mokopuna (CYPC)
- a targeted engagement workstream led by Child Wellbeing Poverty Reduction Group officials at the Ministry of Social Development (MSD).

There were some clear linkages between what we heard directly from children and young people and from sector stakeholders and partners. These included themes about supporting children and young people in the context of their parents/families/whānau and communities, ensuring their essential needs are met, that they are safe, supported in their mental health and cultural identity, have opportunities and spaces for fun and friendships, and have a sense of belonging in their communities.

This paper provides a summary of the subject matter covered during the engagements and of the input and feedback received.



# Engagement with children and young people

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CYPC was contracted by MSD to design and facilitate engagements directly with children and young people. 13 engagement sessions were held in six regions: Gisborne, Auckland, Northland, the West Coast and Wellington.

101 children and young people participated, aged between 8-23 years old. Around 70% identified as Māori, with four of the engagements involving only tamariki and rangatahi Māori. Other priority groups reached included Pacific children and young people; disabled children and young people; children and young people who live in urban and rural areas; neurodiverse children and young people; teen parents; and rainbow and gender diverse children and young people.

The engagement involved working with organisations who were familiar with CYPC or had an existing relationship with its work, and preferably understood the Strategy. For many engagements CYPC worked with community connectors and organisations with whom CYPC had previously partnered for the development of the original Strategy in 2018 and for the 2022 Strategy Review, as well as the engagements for the National Action Plan Against Racism which took place in 2023.

CYPC met with a diverse range of children and young people in both rural and urban settings, and in schools and community spaces. Engagement methods included workshops, individual interviews, group discussion (including talanoa and kōrero), and an online survey. Children and young people drew pictures and wrote on post-its and postcards, and information was also captured via quotes and notetaking.

In answering the questions, children and young people drew on their own experiences and observations, as well as imagining themselves at different ages and describing what they thought their needs and priorities would be.<sup>1</sup>

## What we heard from children and young people

CYPC's engagement focused on understanding what children and young people considered was important to them at different stages across childhood and adolescence, following the life course, and the barriers and enablers for them to thrive. The age groupings considered were 0-4, 5-10, 11-14 and 15-18. CYPC asked all children and young people, regardless of their current age, to reflect on the following questions in relation to each of the above four life course stages.

- What kinds of things matter/ed most?
- What things/challenges get in the way of feeling and doing well?
- What things/supports/people help, or might have helped?
- What is the most important thing you want adults to focus on to support all children and young people to thrive?

CYPC summarised the insights from the engagements into seven overarching themes, as follows.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, refer to the CYPC report: Understanding the life-course journey - Mokopuna voices to inform the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Review 2024 on the [CYPC website](#)



## Theme 1

### Loving, safe and supportive whānau and families

Children and young people overwhelmingly talked about the importance of love, care and attention from parents and a supportive, safe environment to grow up in, especially when reflecting on the needs and priorities of 0–4-year-olds.

Feeling a sense of connection and belonging and spending time with immediate and extended whānau was identified as very important to all children and young people at all four life stages. For many children and young people, pets were included as family members, and identified as a source of love, comfort and safety.

When considering the priorities of older age groups, some children and young people highlighted the importance of reciprocity and contribution; supporting their whānau and making their parents and caregivers proud. Children and young people described other sources of love, care and support that emerged as they aged, such as friends, wider whānau members and trusted adults. When considering barriers to thriving, children and young people identified problems within families as the largest factor impacting wellbeing across all four age groups. Specific family problems included:

- growing up with caregivers who lacked healthy parenting skills
- experiences of neglect, abuse, and family violence
- exposure to drugs and alcohol
- and other family dynamics and safety concerns.

Many children and young people shared their own experiences, describing the significant impact on their lives.

Children and young people emphasised the need for more accessible support and services for struggling families as early as possible, including help to develop parenting skills and more support with finances, mental health issues, violence and addiction.



## What children and young people said about the importance of loving, safe and supportive families

“Babies need a caring and supporting environment to grow up in.”

“... and a safe environment, love, care, nurturing, feeling loved.”

“No matter how old you are, feeling loved by your family is centrally important.”

“My cat, when I’m crying, she’ll come and lie on me.”

“Parents feeling proud.”

“Getting less things, to help my mum to save things, helping my mum out with the hard things she can’t do.”

“Family, spending time [together], because parents are busy.”

“How my family operates – instead of confronting problems and trying new ways, they bottle things up and rely on drugs and alcohol. I didn’t want that in my life.”

“The one message I want to get across is for children who do not have their parents in their life because of drugs and alcohol. For me this is a big problem and has caused my life to feel embarrassed and traumatised.”

“I believe that parents that struggle with stress, relationship and money problems should get more support financially and more guidance. Reason being parents struggle with financial emotional and relationship problems eventually generate an unhealthy environment for any child within the environment.”

“Help for parents to be better parents and not abusive.”

”My mum’s friend let me stay at her place with my baby until I was old enough to get accommodation. It was good being in a healthy space, clean and warm. It modelled what life might be like and woke me up as to how things could be better.”



## Theme 2

### Having the basics

Children and young people said that one of the most important things for all children and young people as they grow up was having their essential needs met. There were dozens of mentions of not having enough money. Children and young people talked about the need for financial support to be provided to new parents and families for essentials such as warm clothes, food, healthcare, hygiene products, school uniforms and school shoes.

Children and young people identified food security, affordable health care and getting enough sleep as particularly important for 0-4 year olds, while housing and addressing the needs of parents who are struggling were identified as fundamental needs across all ages. Concerns impacting young people (aged 15 to 18 years old) included not being able to find work and prohibitively high costs of school, sports and other activities.



What children and young people said about the importance of getting everything they need

“Getting everything we need – safe dry house, good food, good places to be.”

“Financial support for parents that are really struggling with money, more support to lower-income families.”

“Supporting parents with funds for medical care.”

“You need to get in early, as soon as you see people struggling.”

“Not having jobs or money, being broke.”

## Theme 3

### Support to learn and grow

Children and young people also shared their thoughts about the importance of learning and development. They recognised that learning starts with babies in terms of their physical growth and development and identified the kinds of support that were most conducive to thriving during the early years.

Children and young people said that as children age, their school life becomes more central to wellbeing. They described the increasing importance of having responsive teachers who could meet diverse learning needs and enable a sense of choice and autonomy in learning. They described how, once at school, the importance of belonging extended beyond family/whānau environments to include belonging at school. Children and young people also referred to transitions in schooling. In particular, “opportunities for freedom” was a theme when considering priorities for 15–18-year-olds transitioning to adulthood. For this age group, having opportunities to plan and be ready for adulthood was seen as critical, as were adults in their lives who were supportive and non-judgemental.



What children and young people said about the importance of having support to learn and grow

“Kōhanga [is a] good support – good to know he’s safe and learning and being supported.” (Teen parent)

“Plunket/Family Start Well Child checks and immunisations.”  
(Teen parent)

“Having teachers who understand more about learning difficulties so they can help kids with disabilities.”

“I learn lots of stuff and it makes me feel I’m good at this.”

“This kura – they made me feel comfortable straight away – and they said they’d help me if I need anything. They made me feel different – feel loved and get that tingling feeling.”

“Teachers who know me.”

“Money to save for future and create opportunities for freedom.”

“Showing pathways other than purely academics.”

“How to be confident, work experience, knowledge, how to be a leader, help with struggles in work and other life struggles.”

## Affordable sports and recreation and play in safe community spaces

Children and young people highlighted the importance of play for both fun and development, particularly for the 0-4 age-group. They also talked about access to safe and stimulating playgrounds, toys and fun activities. They identified access to sports and hobbies as increasingly important as they age. Sports and recreation were seen as opportunities to have fun and discover interests, as well as fitness and general wellbeing. They don't want money to be a barrier. They talked about the need for activities to be free and accessible and spoke about older age-groups (11-18) needing affordable, safe and welcoming spaces, as well as the need for more cultural activities.



What children and young people told us about the importance of having access to affordable sports and recreation in safe community spaces

“Having good toys and watching and learning the right stuff.”

“Better playgrounds for kids – they’re garbage right now.”

“Experiencing new stuff... opportunities to explore interests.”

“Well-rounded life – hobbies/sports/not just education.”

“Giving kids other outlets, activities like rollerblading that are accessible.”

“If only education and other fun and cool activities didn’t need to be paid for... having to go to places without worrying about money.”

“... Fees for extracurricular activities need to come down.”

“Youth centres are a big support – free games and a safe place to go. Need to make them engaging.”

“Having more youth spaces for kids to feel safe and get them away from drugs and alcohol by pulling them in with interests they enjoy.”





## Theme 5

### Celebrate culture and identity

Children and young people talked about the importance of being supported to discover who they are. This included being respected and supported to express their faith, their culture and providing opportunities for children and young people to be heard.

Children and young people want leadership opportunities and other pathways to express their growing sense of autonomy. They told us about the importance of being heard, feeling understood and of experimenting as a part of growing up. This connects to the theme of learning and development that supports transitions to adulthood.



What children and young people told us about the importance of celebrating culture and identity

“Connecting with our identity and culture.”

“Having knowledge of our society and wider world.”

“Listen to the voices of the young people and seriously consider what they are saying. We’re becoming adults and we are the future.”

“This is our first time at this age, we will make mistakes of which we need to learn from. Allow us to make these mistakes.”

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## Theme 6

### Healthy friendships and relationships

Friendships increasingly matter across the life course. Children and young people talked about the importance of having friends to play with, as well as opportunities and support to make friends and help them develop social skills when they start school.

As children and young people get older, the quality of their friendships is recognised as becoming more important for their mental health and social/emotional wellbeing. Children and young people talked about having good friends they can trust, friends they can talk to and who are supportive, as well as healthy romantic relationships.

Children and young people also highlighted the more difficult aspects of building social skills, such as responding to peer pressure, and several children and young people also talked about being lonely (see ‘Being able to stay happy’: Mental health section for more detail).



### What children and young people told us about the importance of healthy friendships and relationships

“Having fun – being with other kids playing.”

“School – good teachers, friendships, having the environment for social skills.”

“Older kids and teachers could help introduce you to kids your own age to help you make friends – like a buddy system.”

“Find more friends you can trust.”

“Get rid of ‘yes friends’ – get friends who will challenge you and make you better.”

“Make-up – feeling like you have to be pretty.”

“Peer pressure for drugs and alcohol.”



## Theme 7

### Being able to stay happy: Mental health

Children and young people identified feeling happy – and being supported to stay happy and maintain their mental health – as one of the things that mattered most across all ages.

Having a loving, supportive family and home environment and close, trusted friends were identified as key contributors to happiness and mental wellbeing across each of the different life stages. Children and young people also spoke to the importance of being supported to develop self-esteem and learn.

**“...how to be confident... how to be a leader, help with struggles in work and other life struggles.”**

Children and young people described harmful social interactions and relationships, e.g. peer pressure, bullying, “toxic friends”, family violence and problems at home. They shared how these interactions negatively impacted their mental health, resulting in poor self-esteem, feelings of isolation, rejection and loneliness, and shame, guilt and worry.

They also described how their experiences of material hardship and lack of access to essential items such as hygiene products contributed to feelings of shame. They also expressed fears about being unprepared for adulthood, which resulted in children and young people feeling directionless and worried about how they were going to look after themselves.

Many children and young people talked about how hard it was, feeling like they had no one to talk to about their concerns. They spoke about the importance of knowing it is okay to ask for help and, equally, the importance of having safe people in their lives to talk to. They called for increased and easily accessible mental health services, particularly within schools.



What children and young people and their representatives told us about the importance of being able to stay happy

“What matters most to me is children’s mental health, which can stem from family related issues, bullying, finances, etc. So, increasing mental health programmes would help decrease mental health issues.”

“Once people start talking about you, you try to fit what they say, [to] protect yourself. It sticks with you.”

“Bullying – being left out, picked on.”

“Feeling judged for not being good enough.”

“[a feeling of] te whare tapa whā collapsing.”

“Being really sweaty.” ... “Being stinky.”

“Not knowing where to go for opportunities or help with life.”

“Not having someone who supports you.”

“Zero support from the people around them.”

“We need more support like counselling for our youth that don’t feel safe talking to others.”

“Posters at school of helplines.”

“On-site counsellor at schools, walking around amongst the kids so they have a sense of what’s going on for kids – can see kids struggling.”

# Engagement with targeted stakeholders and partners

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This workstream included engagement with representatives of Māori, the Chief Children's Commissioner (the Commissioner) and the Children's Convention Monitoring Group, and peak bodies and NGOs, as well as with academics, thought leaders and science advisors. In addition to the engagements led by CYPC, officials also completed engagements with some key youth representatives. A full list of individuals and organisations engaged with is included in Appendix A. For these engagements, we asked for input and feedback on the key proposed areas for change.

## What we heard from targeted engagement

Overall, the plan to refresh the Strategy, within the context of the changing system, resonated strongly. Those involved in engagements were largely supportive of the direction being taken while noting a number of specific areas for input.

All stakeholders were supportive of keeping the Strategy's existing vision, along with the six outcomes from the original Strategy. There was also widespread support for keeping the 0-24 age range. However, several stakeholders said they wanted to see a clearer line of sight drawn between the six outcomes and the overall framing of the Strategy, including a stronger focus on ensuring outcomes were achieved right across the full 0-24 age range.

## Taking a life course approach with a focus on early life intervention

All stakeholders were supportive of taking a life course approach, with a focus on early life intervention and prevention for children, young people and their families/whānau. They saw the life course approach as a powerful tool to show the life journey and the importance of early intervention.

Academics commented that transitions would be an opportune time to identify people who may be "missing" in the system. Risk settles quickly into those who are disconnected and lack of engagement at key transition points could act as a "red flag."

Meanwhile, a life course model would need to consider the circumstances of children in different communities and contexts, e.g., some cohorts are more likely to leave school earlier and so care is needed to take those variations into account. Generally, stakeholders supported the focus on the first 2,000 days (from conception to age 5), which aligns strongly to the findings of research (such as Growing Up In NZ Study, the Dunedin Study) around how early experiences shape later outcomes. Speaking from personal experience, an I.Lead Youth Ambassador said early intervention is key to ensuring that disabled children are diagnosed and receive support early.

Other feedback included a call for the life course approach to recognise:

- intergenerational dimensions
- taking a more holistic lens to transitions (i.e., consideration of key transition points not only based on age but on wider impacts and experiences such as e.g., parental divorce or losing a parent)
- ensuring that preventative interventions, including those to support parental mental health, are considered not just for the 0-5 age range but across the 5-24 age range as well.

“The life course approach challenges us to look beyond the standard 3-year political horizon. We can’t always expect to immediately see the results of what we spend today – outcomes for children take longer to become apparent.”

**A Better Start National Science Challenge**

## Other input on the general direction and framing

Several stakeholders commented that the Treaty of Waitangi was missing from the refreshed Strategy and needed to be referenced, along with recognising cultural diversity and specificity. Some noted the requirement under the Children’s Act 2014 for the Strategy to focus on those with greater need. They emphasised the need for a specific focus on the greater needs of disabled, Māori, Pacific and care-experienced children and young people in particular, noting the consistently poorer outcomes reported for those groups. The Commissioner, the Children’s Convention Monitoring Group and NZ Council for Christian Social Services also emphasised their desire to see a children’s rights approach made more visible in the refreshed Strategy and across wider government policy.

Stakeholders also encouraged officials to ensure that the cross-over between the Strategy and other government strategies and action plans, as well as any system gaps, would be clearly understood and delineated. Throughout engagements, a general concern was raised about the potential gap between the aspirations expressed in the Strategy and the real-life impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, the recession and recent social sector funding cuts. Stakeholders asked if these factors might limit the Government’s capacity, in a fiscally constrained environment, to undertake the investment needed to progress the outcomes identified for the refreshed Strategy.

There was a desire to emphasise hope, to take a strengths-based approach and to make sure that the language of the refreshed Strategy reflected that.

“We need to push children and young people to dream bigger. Finishing education was a motivator. I had belief that education was going to pull me and my family out of poverty, that my dreams were achievable.”

**VOYCE Whakaronga Mai representative**

## The three priority areas

All stakeholders were supportive of the three priority areas that have been identified for the refreshed Strategy. They felt that the priorities fit with what is known to be important in terms of risk and protective factors that influence children and young people’s outcomes over the long-term. The need for the Government to address material hardship and prevent child harm was widely acknowledged as the impact of those is significant. A focus on the first 2,000 days was also seen as being critical, as this is an opportunity to get things right early on, and improve outcomes in adolescence and later life.

“On balance, while it’s crucial we always take a holistic approach, the priorities are the right ones. They’re areas where we must make progress, and where we can make the biggest potential gains to support the rights of children within their whānau.”

**Chief Children’s Commissioner, Dr Claire Achmad**

Stakeholders identified the following areas for particular focus within each of the priorities, shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Key areas of focus for prioritisation within the three priority areas.**

Priorities for the first 2,000 days	Priorities for reducing child material hardship	Priorities for preventing harm against children
<p><b>Supporting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved maternal mental health, with a specific focus on wraparound support for pregnant wāhine Māori</li> <li>the development of executive function and self-regulation in young children</li> <li>pregnancy wellbeing</li> <li>parents and caregivers through public education to help them improve interactions with their children</li> <li>improved access to (and quality of) early childcare services, including setting expectations and measuring outcomes</li> <li>the core determinants of health</li> <li>protective factors such as immunisation</li> <li>breastfeeding and wider mental health</li> <li>access to work for mothers with babies and young children</li> <li>reduced material hardship in the first 2,000 days.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining a broad focus on reducing child poverty (beyond material hardship)</li> <li>Maintaining a focus on those most in need, including disabled children and children in families impacted by disability, and those experiencing intersectionality</li> <li>Considering the impacts of maternal poverty</li> <li>Understanding intergenerational inequity felt by Māori</li> <li>Improving regional access to core education and health services</li> <li>Strengthening the Healthy School Lunches Programme</li> <li>Addressing high housing costs/prioritising public housing supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taking a wide scope in the definition of “child harm” including a focus on physical, mental, social, emotional and economic harm</li> <li>Investing directly in parents/carers to be good caregivers and have the skills and support to keep children safe, and in the same school and community</li> <li>Improving cross-government coordination (across prevention, early intervention and response factors)</li> <li>Considering the Treaty of Waitangi and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child when scoping child harm</li> <li>Considering problems for families with children in emergency housing</li> <li>Considering alcohol and drugs as key drivers of child harm</li> <li>A focus on success stories and rehabilitation</li> </ul>

## Thinking about the interface and overlap between the three priority areas

Several stakeholders saw a clear overlap between the three priority areas, e.g., children in material hardship being more likely to experience family harm due to the toxic stress caused to parents by being in poverty. They welcomed a focus on considering those factors together. Looking at children and young people who were experiencing challenges across all three priority areas would be valuable. This might include considering how:

- reducing child material hardship in the first 2,000 days might be a causal factor for reducing some aspects of child harm
- maternal mental health might sit at the nexus of all three priorities
- social determinants might sit at the nexus of all three priorities

Strengthening families, supporting strong parenting via Early Childhood Education (ECE) support services and improving access to ECE would also support outcomes under all three priority areas. From a community perspective, the sense of connection/belonging, the sense of agency and having enough bandwidth to be able to take up opportunities was also critical.

## Gaps or areas that might need to change

Concerns were raised about the risks of deprioritising supporting child and youth mental wellbeing and addressing racism, discrimination and stigma, which were priorities as a result of the 2022 Strategy Review. Many also commented that a focus on mental health should run across all ages. There was also a desire for the Strategy to consider the determinants and context for mental health, e.g. the choices young people have access to such as being supported to participate in areas such as sport, art and culture, what aspirations they have and their wider experiences of belonging and wellbeing.

Stakeholders also called for a continued focus on children and young people being heard on decisions that impact their lives, a strong focus for the 2019 Strategy which was not coming through in the initial framing for the refresh. They raised a range of further questions.

- Does focusing solely on three priorities risk a reduced focus on (and investment in) improving wider outcomes that are not linked specifically to those priority areas
- Does a specific focus on the first 2,000 days mean there will be a reduced focus on intervention and prevention for children in the also critical middle years (aged 6-12) and for young people from 12-24? It is also important for teenagers and older age groups to be supported to thrive and succeed.
  - Ara Taiohi, in particular, noted a causality dilemma. What about the children and young people who are in those age cohorts already? What interventions and supports would be targeted at them and how could they be expected to change their behaviours to meet the Government Targets (e.g. school attendance and youth offending) without specific supports?



The Children’s Convention Monitoring Group highlighted a need to be careful about reprioritisation and ensure that the Government doesn’t simply take funding away from those who still need it to put it towards others who also need it but better match the three priority areas.

“Ministers need to acknowledge the unique responsibility they have to children and young people in care, as the state has guardianship over that group. This puts some responsibility into decision making and extra priority placed on them because they may not have that parental care and oversight elsewhere.”

**VOYCE Whakarongo Mai representative**

## The investment framework

We asked stakeholders what a successful investment framework might look like, what are the key things that the Government should consider when prioritising investment and where might investment be focused to have the greatest impact. We then asked what investment and delivery principles might be useful to help guide decision making. Stakeholders shared a range of ideas, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Ideas shared to support the development of investment and delivery principles.

### Investment and delivery principles might support a focus on:

- Prioritising early years investment when a child’s critical development can be influenced.
- Determining how to enable longer-term investment for longer-term interventions in the context of annual Budget and three-yearly election cycles.
- Measuring ROI in terms of fiscal and social ROI, as a focus solely on fiscal return could lead to those most in need not getting support.
- Supporting innovation – noting a tension with the need to prove evidence of impact before implementation under a social investment approach.
- Recognising investment looks different for Māori (with a whānau, rather than individual child, lens) and investing in culturally appropriate delivery.
- Supporting community-led (and child and youth-led) investment and delivery models.
- Recognising that different regions/communities know their needs best and want to be more involved in decision-making.
- Targeting support to children and young people who have the greatest need, e.g., disabled children, children in disabled families, and Māori, Pacific and care-experienced children and young people.
- Referencing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as an underpinning framework for the Strategy.
- Auckland Codesign Lab said the concept of a learning system, which was a key theme of the 2022 Strategy Review, was still important, and the delivery principles could provide a vehicle to retain this.

Stakeholders also suggested referencing the [Early Childhood Curriculum/Te Whāriki](#), the [Social Sector Commissioning action plan principles](#) and the [Mana Taiohi](#) initiative in the development of principles to support the refreshed Strategy.

“It is about understanding the cultural need here. You can send a Māori mother an appointment to go to Plunket but that doesn’t mean they will turn up. In some cases, they won’t turn up because the cultural setting is not right for them.”

**Te Hiku representative**

## The measurement framework

Stakeholders shared that they want to see a comprehensive measurement framework that includes all the measures and indicators they see as being critical to child and youth wellbeing. They were less focused on streamlining measurement or reporting – rather, they wanted to see comprehensive coverage, breadth and depth, including more granular reporting that would show the different outcomes and experiences for different groups of children and young people.

Many said they wanted to see clear breakdowns of all measures, particularly in response to the current inequities and disparities in outcomes for: tangata whenua; ethnicity – particularly for Pacific children; disability- disabled children and children in households affected by disability; care-impacted or care experienced children; age – noting this was a gap in the current measurement framework; children of sole parents; young parents/ teen parents – youth included in the 0-24 age range who are parents.

Representatives of Māori wanted to see te ao Māori views of wellbeing in the measurement framework and to use and align that with the data they currently collect. Pou Tangata raised the need to measure outcomes and experiences at a whānau level. They also raised the need to measure and report on tamariki and whānau who are not accessing services or who may not be represented in data because they are not engaging with the system.

Pou Tangata also wanted see alignment of the measures to the National Iwi Leaders Forum’s targets and measures. Te Hiku raised the need for measures and outcomes to be reported at as granular and local a level as possible, noting regional level data does not provide the insight communities need. They noted that they collect significant data about wellbeing and outcomes in their region that is not used by agencies.

Generally, stakeholders stressed the need for measuring and reporting to be localised and at the community level, reflecting the needs and priorities of specific communities. They did not see a national or standard approach to measurement or monitoring as being effective. Peak bodies were interested in how the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) can be better used to monitor outcomes for cohorts of children and young people. Some groups were also interested in how to measure and monitor transitions or how to tie outcomes together, e.g. transition from early learning to primary school, to better understand the experiences of children.

Representatives of youth raised the critical importance of measurement and reporting outcomes for specific population groups including disabled children, children in disabled families and care-experienced children.

While most feedback was about outcome or input measures for children and young people, some groups also raised questions about how we might measure the Strategy as a strategy, whether system performance measures might be needed, or how we might evaluate the impact of the Strategy.

## Key things to measure

Groups shared specific measures and indicators that they felt were important to measure. The indicators suggested were:

Domain	Indicators
Parent and whānau wellbeing	Parent-child relationship and interactions, family and whānau wellbeing, parental and maternal education, parental substance use
Material hardship and areas related to material hardship	Food bank usage, food insecurity reporting on 17 items of DEP 17 index <sup>2</sup> , socio-economic disadvantage and status
Housing	Housing affordability, housing quality, crowding, housing insecurity, housing instability
Financial capability	FinCap data <sup>3</sup>
Physical health	Access to GP, communicable diseases associated with poverty, such as rheumatic fever, meningitis, oral health, immunisation, potentially avoidable hospitalisations and ambulatory sensitive hospitalisations, obesity, sleep, nutrition, access to primary health care
Mental health	No specific measures were suggested, but this was an area that all stakeholders agreed was important
Education	Early learning, schooling, self-regulation and executive function, experiences of racism and discrimination, network of early learning services, stand downs and suspensions, non-enrolment at schools
Incidences of harm	Violence admissions to hospital, non-accidental emergencies, bullying, online harm, experiences of racism and discrimination, experiences of child maltreatment, family violence, sexual violence, abuse, neglect, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Some groups also raised specific measures or things to monitor at specific points in the life course. They noted measuring outcomes or progress across the life course of a child is not the same as measuring progress towards the Strategy priorities or outcomes.

Some groups identified areas where there are data gaps that they want to see addressed through the Strategy measurement framework including significant gaps in data collection by disability, data collection by different age cohorts, particularly for early years (0-5/first 2,000 days) and middle childhood (6-12), and data collection around mental health.

A small number of groups identified the need for new measures of food insecurity and of children's self-reported experiences. Some groups gave feedback on the use of the nine Government Targets as measures. There were some concerns that the nine Government Targets would not be the best proxies for measuring the outcomes for children and young people, for example emergency housing not being a good indicator of wider housing security.

<sup>2</sup> For information about the use of DEP-17 as measure for material hardship, please refer to the Stats NZ website: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/methods/measuring-child-poverty-material-hardship/>

<sup>3</sup> For further information about FinCap data, refer to: <https://www.fincap.org.nz/>

# Specific feedback from Pou Tangata (National Iwi Chairs Forum)

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The Child Wellbeing and Poverty Reduction Group and Pou Tangata share the mutual priority of child poverty reduction and have been working in partnership to delivery on this priority.

Recognising our partnership relationship, we asked Pou Tangata to review early drafts of engagement summaries from CYPC and MSD. They noted some specific feedback including a wish to see:

- a specific focus on rural/urban differences, noting that urban areas have larger populations and access to a choice of service providers, while rural areas are widely spread with minimal options – and consideration of this in the measurement framework
- a focus on ensuring that Strategy implementation takes account of te ao Māori and iwi perspectives and experiences, and supports improved outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, including by working with Pou Tangata
- recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi
- a list of the Ministers/agencies that will be responsible for the Strategy’s implementation
- information about how those involved in targeted engagement were identified
- information about what criteria would determine which agencies or local providers would engage in the Strategy, with a specific focus the 0-5 cohort, including conception
- consideration of further indicators in the measurement framework, e.g. access to safe play areas; access to positive activities (e.g. sports clubs - the impact is often underestimated in communities); adoption of limited alcohol sales policies in district council areas.

## Acknowledgements

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Thank you to everyone who participated in the engagement process for the refresh of the Strategy in June and July 2024.

We are grateful to those who participated for their time, wisdom, and insights, as well as to the community connectors and partners who supported CYPC to deliver the specific engagements directly with children and young people. The time given by a range of stakeholders and partners, including children and young people themselves, who attended focus groups, virtual workshops, and one-on-one discussions from around New Zealand, was deeply appreciated.

The input and feedback received during the engagements has been used to help inform advice to Ministers on the refresh of the Strategy and will continue to be a reference point for ongoing Strategy implementation.

You can sign up for important updates or let us know if you have any further queries by emailing the team at [ChildYouthWellbeing@msd.govt.nz](mailto:ChildYouthWellbeing@msd.govt.nz)

# Appendix 1 – List of individuals and organisations we engaged with

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The following individuals and organisations participated in engagements on the refresh of the Strategy during June and July 2024.

## Stakeholders and partners who participated in targeted engagement

**Children and young people (and their representatives):** Ara Taiohi, Children and Young People’s Commission (Chief Children’s Commissioner Dr Claire Achmad), The Children’s Convention Monitoring Group (including the following members: Children’s Rights Alliance, Human Rights Commission, Save the Children New Zealand, and UNICEF New Zealand), Yes Disability’s I.Lead Youth Advisors and VOYCE Whakaronga Mai representatives.

**Representatives of iwi/Māori\*:** Pou Tangata (National Iwi Leaders Forum), some direct engagement with tamariki and rangatahi Māori via CYPC (as above), Te Hiku Social Development and Wellbeing Accord Group.

**Peak bodies, NGOs, Local Government NZ, and other groups:** Barnardos, Child Poverty Action Group, Christians Against Poverty NZ, Local Government New Zealand, NZ Council of Christian Social Services, Plunket, Salvation Army, Social Service Providers Aotearoa and MSD’s Pacific Reference Group.

**Academics, thought leaders and science advisors:** A Better Start National Science Challenge, Auckland Co-Design Lab, Chief Science Advisors, Growing Up In New Zealand School of Population Health, Kōi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures, the Dunedin Study.

\*Note: Further engagement included participation/insights sharing in an Early Years Wānanga hosted by National Public Health Service in Auckland on 14 June, which included representation from iwi/Māori and Pacific Peoples communities.



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